



Shade #3

DC Comics, June 1997

by Robinson & Blevins

Another fine H&A V6 Grundy scan

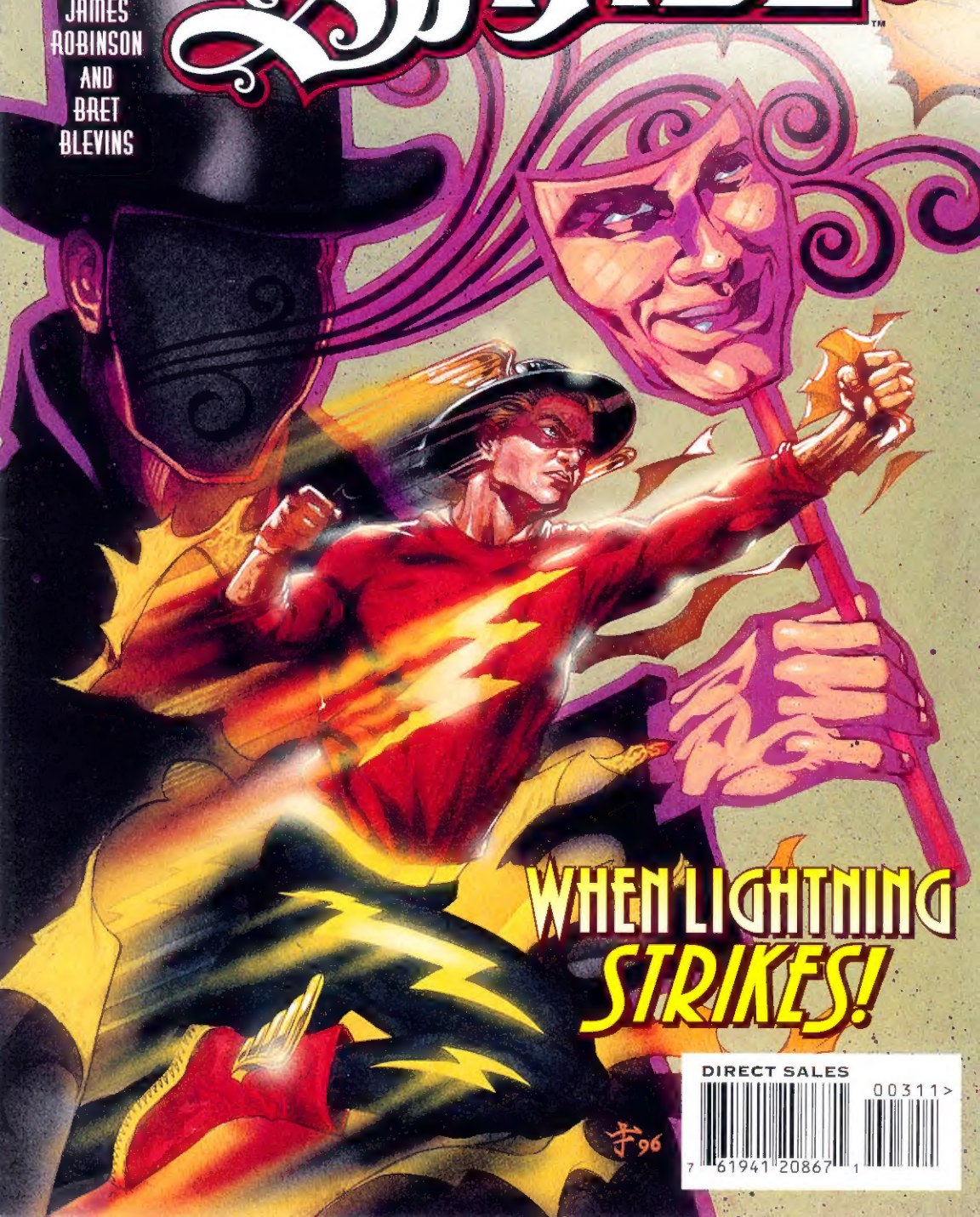


FROM THE PAGES OF **STARMAN**
THE

SHADE

3 \$2.25 US
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JUN 97

BY
JAMES
ROBINSON
AND
BRET
BLEVINS



WHEN LIGHTNING
STRIKES!

DIRECT SALES



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*After Margarete, I didn't meet
a Ludlow for many years.*

*During the blitz
mystery I shared
with Captain X,
there was word of
one plot against me.*



*But I learned the Ludlow in question had put his
scheme on hold when war began, marched off to serve
his country, and fell at Dunkirk.*

*Upon my return to America a new challenge loomed
before me. One that filled me with wonder, fear and
delight.*

*I was not alone. My powers. My cursed, foul, fierce,
dark, dire, wonderful powers had been as an affliction
to me. Separating me from man. Making me hate man
for his normalcy and resent him and despise and disdain
him.*

My heart was as black as my shadow by this time.

*But now... now I was no longer alone. There were
others afflicted as me. And one...*



*...one I
chose*



*Barry, who would follow,
was a boy scout. But Jay...
Jay had wit and quite and
wisdom. And that along
with his speed made him
a god...*

Why did I fight those of super speed? I'm not sure that I even know the answer to that...

...I once mused that they represented the antithesis of my own languid self. I'm sure Jung would suggest that I, a thief, was trying to snatch the mantle from my own personal godhead, Mercury, who was god of thieves and messengers.



Or it may simply have been because I thought Jay's helmet charming.



But the glorious joust went on, and I hoped that it would never stop.

It did.

...AND NOW NEWS THAT WILL SHOCK MANY RESIDENTS OF KEYSTONE. THE FLASH, THE CITY'S OWN SPEEDSTER HERO, ANNOUNCED HIS RETIREMENT TODAY.

IN A FILMED MESSAGE HE HAD THIS TO SAY ABOUT THE DECISION...



1950.



IT HAS BEEN AN HONOR TO PROTECT THE PEOPLE OF KEYSTONE CITY, AN HONOR AND A PRIVILEGE.

BUT I MUST NOW LAY THAT LIFE ASIDE. I AM A HUSBAND. I HAVE DUTIES OUTSIDE THOSE OF MY COSTUME. MY WIFE AND MY LIFE WITH HER ARE OWED TIME WITHOUT THE THREAT OF DANGER OR TRAGEDY.

THE FLASH WENT ON TO SAY HE ALSO FELT OUT OF TOUCH WITH THE NEW DECADE AND QUESTIONED A NEED FOR COSTUMED HEROES AT ALL. IN THIS TIME, HE ALSO SAID THE HUALC'S RECENT ATTACKS ON THE JUSTICE SOCIETY HAD HELPED HIS RESOLVE IN THIS MATTER.



WHETHER HIS MISGIVINGS ABOUT THE NEED FOR SUPERHEROES HAS ANY GROUNDS, IN A FOLLOW ON FROM HIS RETIREMENT, NEWS THAT ANOTHER HERO HAS COME FORWARD TO TAKE THE FLASH'S PLACE.

THE SPIDER, THE SLEUTHING ARCHER WHO UNTIL RECENTLY OPERATED IN ST. LOUIS, ANNOUNCED HE WOULD RELOCATE TO KEYSTONE.

HOW HE'LL FARE IN THIS CITY REMAINS TO BE SEEN.



HOW INDEED.



THE BATTLE
INSIDE KEYSTONE'S
WATER AND POWER
BUILDING LASTED FOR
OVER AN HOUR BEFORE
THE SPIDER EMERGED
TRIUMPHANT.

THE THINKER'S
CRIMINAL ARMY HAD
SEALED OFF ALL MEANS
OF ENTRY BUT THE SPIDER
SOMEHOW FOUND ACCESS,
AND AFTER STEALTHILY
OVERPOWERING THESE
HENCHMEN, REACHED THE
THINKER AND BROUGHT
THE MASTERMIND OUT
TO THE WAITING
AUTHORITIES.



IN LIGHT OF THE
SPIDER'S TRIUMPH...
THIS AFTER MANY OTHER
CRIME-FIGHTING SUCCESSSES
SINCE HIS ARRIVAL HERE
LAST MONTH...IT SEEMS
THE SPIDER CAN INDEED
BE CALLED KEYSTONE
CITY'S PROTECTOR.

AND TO FURTHER
BRING THIS FACT HOME,
HIS ILLUSTRIOUS
PREDECESSOR, THE
FLASH, MADE A SURPRISE
REAPPEARANCE TO
PUBLICLY ENDORSE
THE SPIDER'S
EFFORTS.

THE SPIDER AND
I ONLY MET BRIEFLY
DURING MY TIME IN
THE ALL STAR SQUADRON.
HOWEVER, IT'S STILL
WITH GREAT
CONFIDENCE I
SAY...



...HE'S
THE HERO THIS
CITY NEEDS.

A NEW
KNIGHT. A NEW
JOUST.



*I entered this tourney
with caution.*

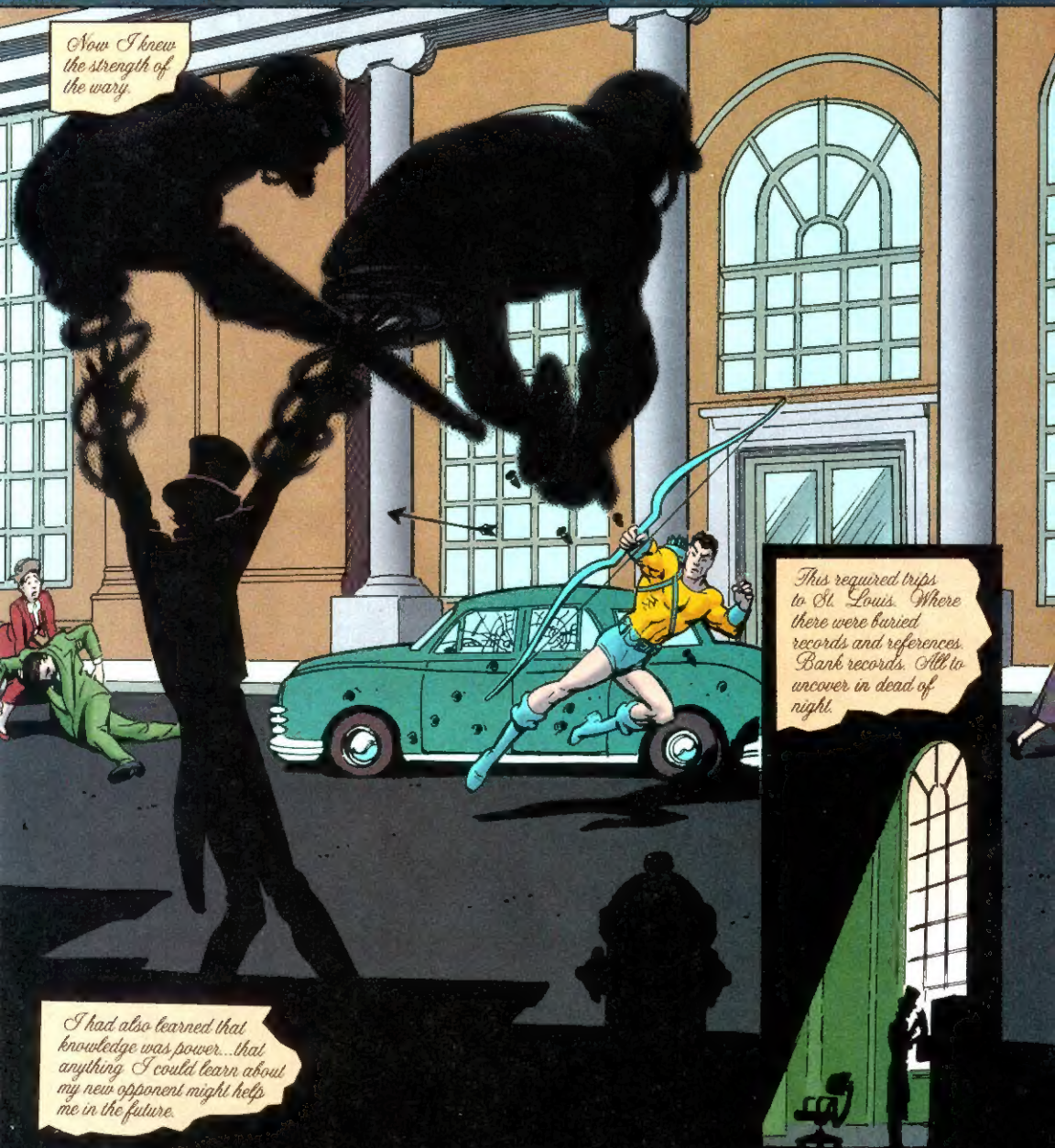
*I had fought an opponent in 1863, when
I thought I knew the full extent of my
powers and I was filled with bully
brashness...*

*That opponent sent me to
another dimension...*

*...where I stayed
far too long.*

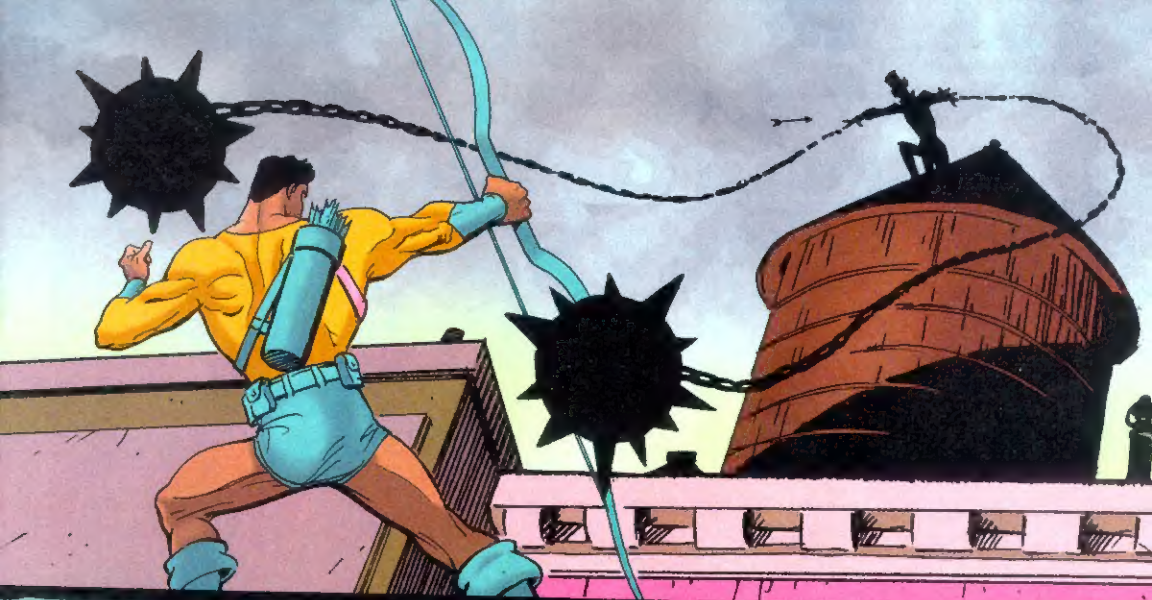


*Now I knew
the strength of
the wary.*



*This required trips
to St. Louis. Where
there were buried
records and references.
Bank records. All to
uncover in dead of
night.*

*I had also learned that
knowledge was power...that
anything I could learn about
my new opponent might help
me in the future.*



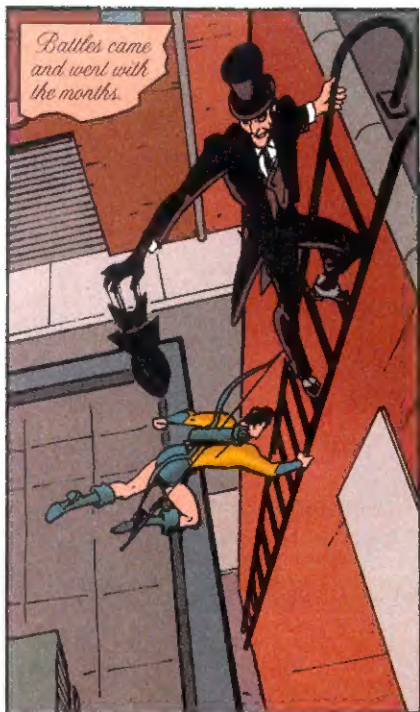
I'M TOLD YOU KNOW EVERYTHING THAT GOES ON IN ST. LOUIS...AND EVERYTHING GONE. SO TELL ME OF HIM, THIS SPIDER FELLOW, AND HIS TIME HERE.

NO, HE'D KILL ME.

YOU'RE MOMENTS FROM DYING BY MY HAND, AND YOU STILL FEAR A MAN WHO'S A CITY AWAY?

WHY WOULD YOU FEAR A HERO SO?





Battles came
and went with
the months.



Soon it
was 1951.



SO YOU
WERE A ST.
LOUIS SUPER-
VILLAIN?

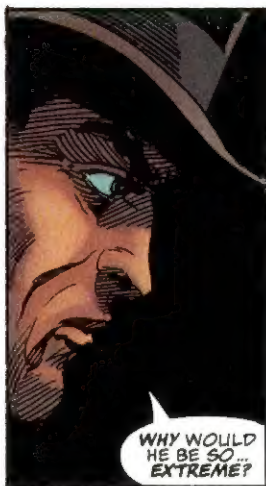
YEAH.

I WAS CALLED
THE SURPRISE
ON ACCOUNTA MY
POWERS. I FIRED
DIFFERENT RAYS FROM
EACH OF MY FINGERS.
NO ONE KNEW WHAT
FINGER...WHAT POWER
I'D USE.

I'M SURE
YOU WERE MOST
SURPRISING.



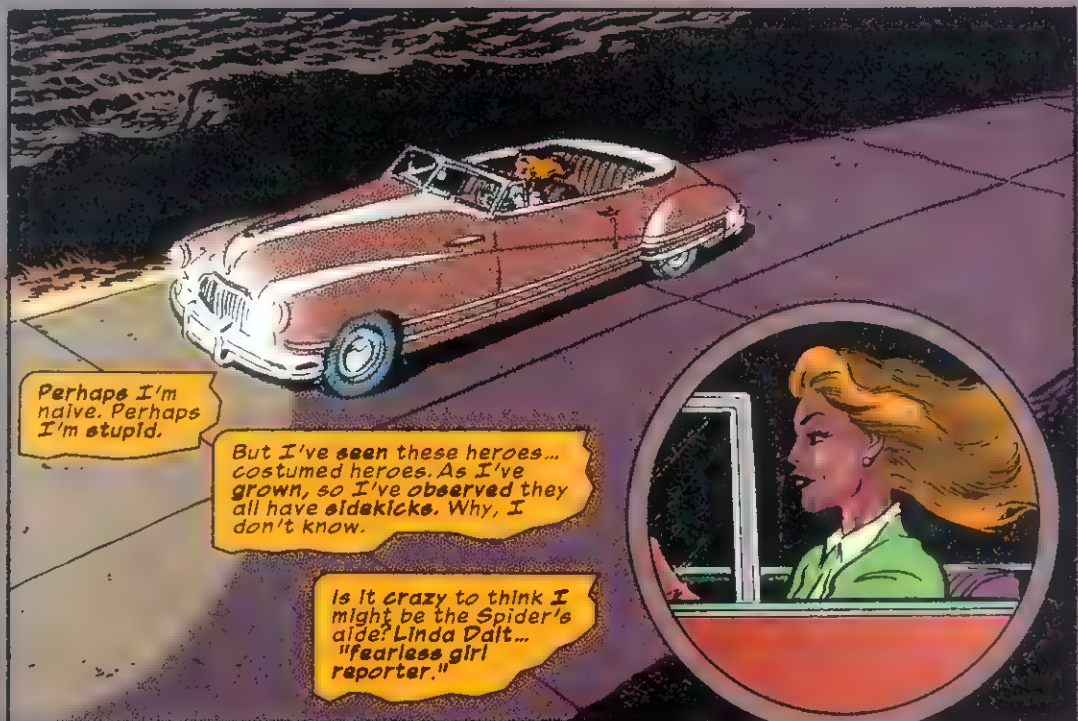
BUT THE
SPIDER FIXED
IT SO I DIDN'T
HAVE MY
POWERS NO
MORE.



WHY WOULD
HE BE SO...
EXTREME?



OH I KNOW.
I KNOW FULL
WELL.



Perhaps I'm
naïve. Perhaps
I'm stupid.

But I've seen these heroes...
costumed heroes. As I've
grown, so I've observed they
all have sidekicks. Why, I
don't know.

Is it crazy to think I
might be the Spider's
aide? Linda Dalt...
"fearless girl
reporter."



If I can win
the man's
confidence, I
could go with
him on
adventures.



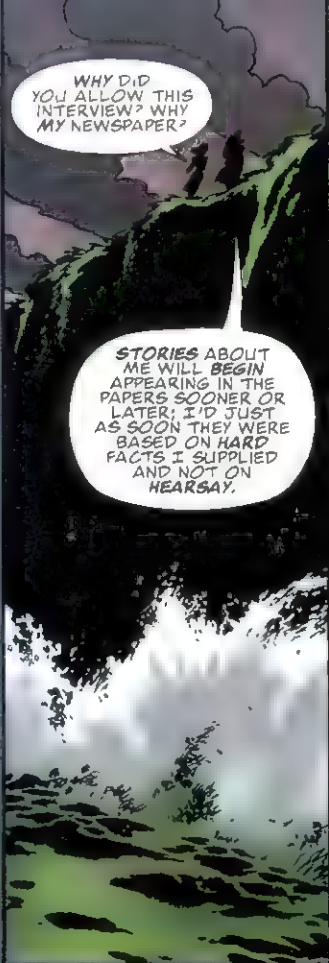
And the book
I'd write later
could win me
awards.

HELLO, MR
SPIDER



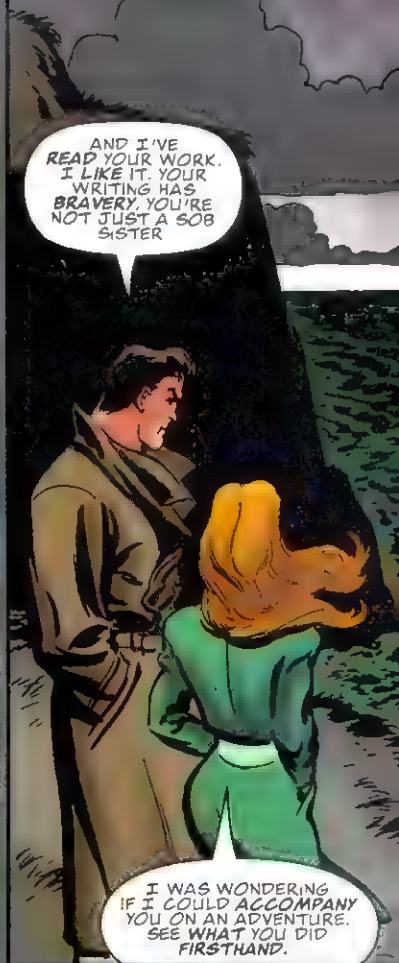
MISS
DALTON: GREAT
TO MEET
YOU

CALL ME SPIDER.
IT'S A NICKNAME
I HAD AS A KID THAT
STUCK. THAT'S WHY I
KEPT IT INSTEAD OF
CALLING MYSELF 'THE
PHANTOM ARCHER' OR
'THE YELLOW ARROW'
OR SOME OTHER
CORNBALL NAME.



WHY DID
YOU ALLOW THIS
INTERVIEW? WHY
MY NEWSPAPER?

STORIES ABOUT
ME WILL BEGIN
APPEARING IN THE
PAPERS SOONER OR
LATER; I'D JUST
AS SOON THEY WERE
BASED ON HARD
FACTS I SUPPLIED
AND NOT ON
HEARSAY.



AND I'VE
READ YOUR WORK.
I LIKE IT. YOUR
WRITING HAS
BRAVERY, YOU'RE
NOT JUST A SOB
SISTER

I WAS WONDERING
IF I COULD ACCOMPANY
YOU ON AN ADVENTURE.
SEE WHAT YOU DID
FIRSTHAND.



IT WOULD
MAKE MY WORK
MUCH EASIER.

AND THE
WRITING MORE
VIVID TOO,
I BET

MAYBE.
LET'S SEE HOW
THIS FIRST
INTERVIEW
GOES

FAIR
ENOUGH



SO, MR.
SPIDER, TELL
ME ABOUT
YOUR TRIUMPHS
IN ST. LOUIS.

JUST SPIDER,
LINDA. I TOLD
YOU. JUST CALL
ME SPIDER



I've tried to tell. Try a jarruck of my findings.

I was nervous, I admit. We had been four for almost a decade. Now, I would come to him as a friend.



And then I saw him. And her. And the life I could never have.



And no friend would ask him to leave that





HELLO,
SPIDER.

SHADE
HEY MAN

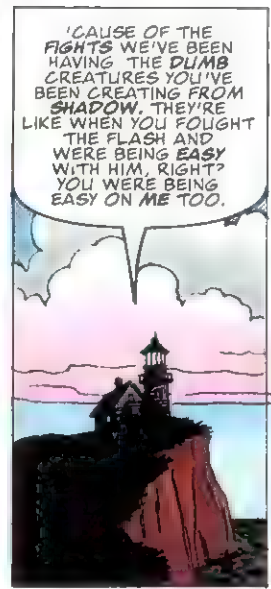


YOU
SEEM VERY
CALM.

I'VE BEEN
EXPECTING IT
IS ALL.

LOOKING
FORWARD TO
IT, IN POINT OF
FACT, THIS IS IT,
HUH? YOU
KNOW?

HOW DO
YOU KNOW I
KNOW?



'CAUSE OF THE
FIGHTS WE'VE BEEN
HAVING, THE DUMB
CREATURES YOU'VE
BEEN CREATING FROM
SHADOW, THEY'RE
LIKE WHEN YOU FOUGHT
THE FLASH AND
WERE BEING EASY
WITH HIM, RIGHT?
YOU WERE BEING
EASY ON ME TOO.



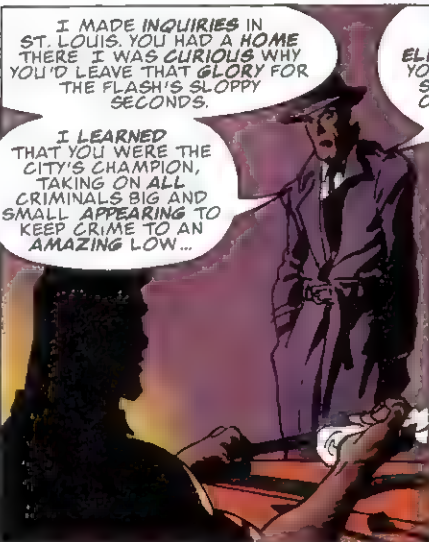
I THOUGHT
YOU WERE ANOTHER
NOBLE FOOL, ANOTHER
FLASH. I DIDN'T
REALIZE YOU WERE
A CRIMINAL.

SO NOW I
GET THE TREATMENT?
WHEN YOU BRING FORTH THE
SHADOW NEXT, THE CREATURES
WILL BE HORRIFYING AND DEADLY
LIKE THEY WERE IN THE OLD DAYS.



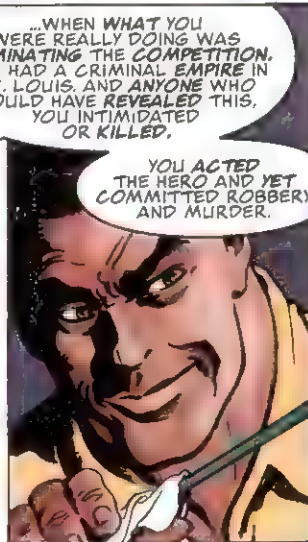
IT SEEMS
YOU KNOW AN
AWFUL LOT
ABOUT ME

ALL WILL BE
REVEALED PRESENTLY.
FIRSTLY I WANT TO
KNOW WHAT YOU'VE
LEARNED.



I MADE INQUIRIES IN
ST. LOUIS. YOU HAD A HOME
THERE. I WAS CURIOUS WHY
YOU'D LEAVE THAT GLORY FOR
THE FLASH'S SLOPPY
SECONDS.

I LEARNED
THAT YOU WERE THE
CITY'S CHAMPION,
TAKING ON ALL
CRIMINALS BIG AND
SMALL APPEARING TO
KEEP CRIME TO AN
AMAZING LOW...



...WHEN WHAT YOU
WERE REALLY DOING WAS
ELIMINATING THE COMPETITION.
YOU HAD A CRIMINAL EMPIRE IN
ST. LOUIS. AND ANYONE WHO
COULD HAVE REVEALED THIS,
YOU INTIMIDATED
OR KILLED.

YOU ACTED
THE HERO AND YET
COMMITTED ROBBERY
AND MURDER.



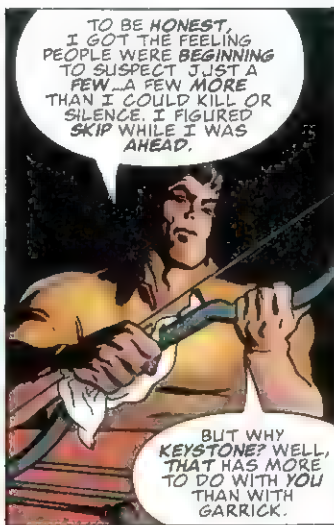
NOT TO MENTION
SMUGGLING, AND THE
THREE CASES OF
KIDNAPPING. ALL THAT
AND I STILL GET
INVITED TO ALL STAR
SQUADRON REUNION
DINNERS.

HOW DID
YOU FIND
OUT?



THOSE YOU SCARED INTO SILENCE. I SCARED MORE AND GOT THEM TALKING AGAIN.

THE ONLY THING I DIDN'T LEARN IS WHY YOU RELOCATED. YOU HAD IT ALL THERE.



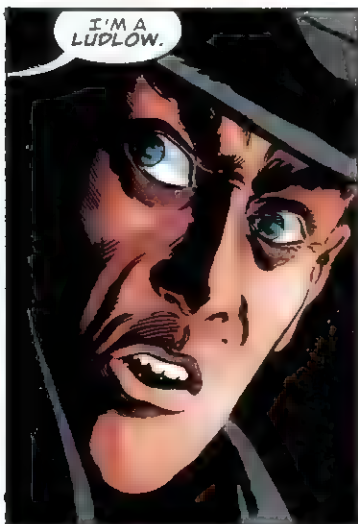
TO BE HONEST, I GOT THE FEELING PEOPLE WERE BEGINNING TO SUSPECT JUST A FEW... A FEW MORE THAN I COULD KILL OR SILENCE. I FIGURED SKIP WHILE I WAS AHEAD.

BUT WHY KEYSTONE? WELL, THAT HAS MORE TO DO WITH YOU THAN WITH GARRICK.



YOU SEE THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT ME YOU DIDN'T UNCOVER. ONE SMALL BUT IMPORTANT FACT

YES?

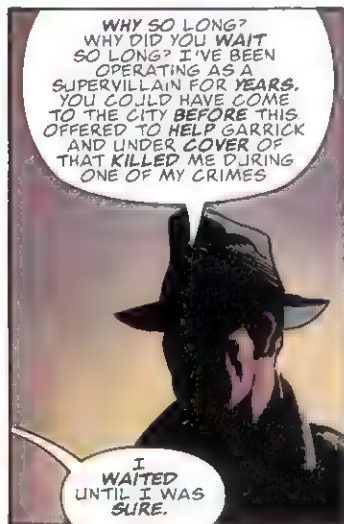


I'M A LUDLOW.



I CAME HERE TO DESTROY YOU

JAY GARRICK'S RETIREMENT WAS A CONVENIENCE, BUT HAD YOU BEEN GREEN LANTERN'S ENEMY I WOULD HAVE GONE TO GOTHAM INSTEAD.



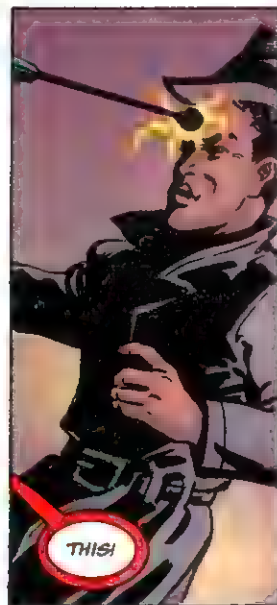
WHY SO LONG? WHY DID YOU WAIT SO LONG? I'VE BEEN OPERATING AS A SUPERVILLAIN FOR YEARS. YOU COULD HAVE COME TO THE CITY BEFORE THIS OFFERED TO HELP GARRICK AND UNDER COVER OF THAT KILLED ME DURING ONE OF MY CRIMES

I WAITED UNTIL I WAS SURE.

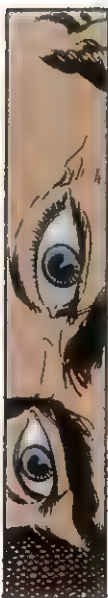


SURE THAT I COULD BEST YOU. SURE THAT I WAS THE BEST. FAST ENOUGH.

TO DO WHAT?



THIS!



WHY DIDN'T YOU
KILL ME? NOW...OR
FOR THAT MATTER WHEN
WE FOUGHT BEFORE?

I
NEEDED
THOSE
BATTLES.

YOU DIDN'T KILL JAY
GARRICK, SO I REALIZED
THIS WAS ALL SOME KIND OF
GAME WITH YOU. I KNEW
THAT AS LONG AS I PLAYED
THAT SAME GAME I WAS
GOING TO SURVIVE THE
ENCOUNTERS TOO

BUT IN THE PROCESS
YOU'D USE YOUR SHADOW.
I HAD TWO MEN AT EACH
ENCOUNTER, ONLOOKERS
APPARENTLY, EACH TIME
WAITING WITH ICE CHESTS
TO CONTAIN RESIDUE
FROM THE SHADOW YOU
THREW AROUND. BY NOW
I'VE AMASSED A NICE
AMOUNT.

YES, YOU
USED GARRICK'S
NAME EARLIER.
YOU KNOW HIS
SECRET
IDENTITY?

HE TOLD ME, I'M
HIS SUCCESSOR AFTER
ALL, WHY WOULDN'T
HE?

I'VE ALREADY
INTRODUCED THE KILLER
AS AN AIDE, SO HE'LL BE
TRUSTED AND ACCEPTED
INTO THE GARRICKS'
HOME, WHERE HE'LL KILL
THEM, AND LEAVE SHADOW
RESIDUE ON THEIR
BODIES.

I HAVE A KILLER
ON HIS WAY TO JAY
GARRICK'S HOME.

YOU'LL BE BLAMED.
THE WORLD WILL HUNT
YOU. SUPERHEROES,
G-MEN.

WHO IS MORE BELOVED
AMONG AMERICA'S HEROES
THAN THE FLASH? EVEN
NOW, WHEN THE WORLD IS
TURNING ITS BACK ON OUR
KIND, THEY LOVE HIS SMILE
AND HUMILITY. WHO ELSE IS
MORE ADMIRE? GREEN
LANTERN? HAWKMAN
PERHAPS?

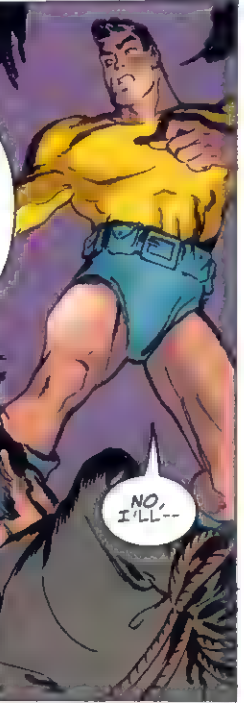
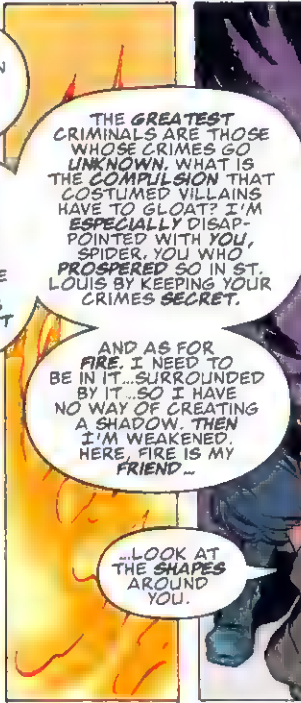
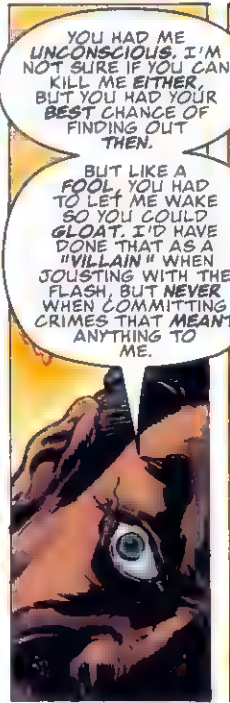
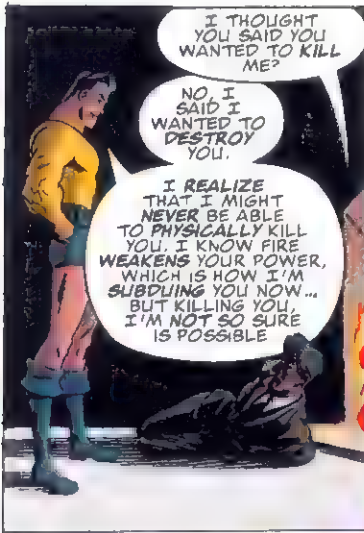
STARMAN?

IN OPAL CITY
MAYBE, NOWHERE
ELSE.

AND HOURMAN, DR.
FATE, DR. MID-NITE,
THE SPECTRE, ALL TOO
REMOVED, TOO DARK.
FRANKLY I THINK
AMERICA'S GLAD TO
SEE THEM GONE.

BUT THE FLASH. MEN
WANT TO BE HIS BUDDY AND
WOMEN WANT TO BAKE HIM
CHERRY PIES. HE IS
AMERICA.

AND IF YOU WERE
THOUGHT TO BE HIS
KILLER, YOU'D BE
HATED BY
EVERYONE.







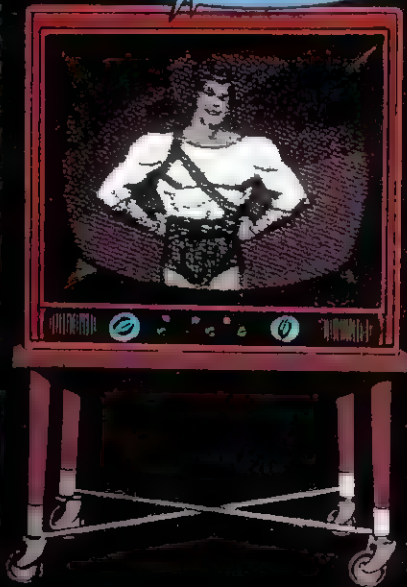
MRS. GARRICK, ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?





IN SHOCKING NEWS
TODAY KEYSTONE
RESIDENTS LEARNED OF
THE SPIDER'S CRIMINAL
ACTIVITIES.

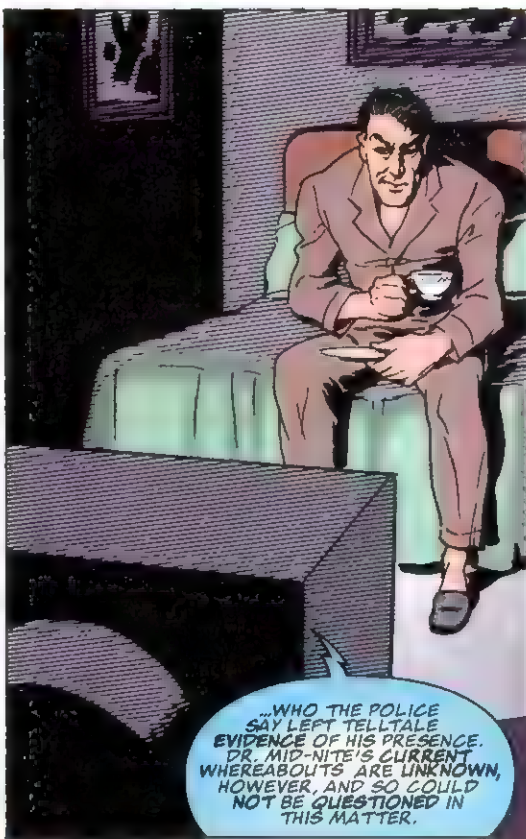
THE SPIDER'S CRIMINAL
NETWORK WHICH RULED
ST. LOUIS WITH A FIERCE YET
COVERT HAND, HAD ALREADY
BEGUN TO EXTEND TO KEYSTONE
CITY, THIS MADE EASIER BY THE
FLASH'S RECENT RETIRE-
MENT.



THE PERSON WHO
UNCOVERED THE TRUTH
ABOUT THE SPIDER, AS WELL
AS PREVENTING AN APPARENT
ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT ON
THE FLASH'S LIFE, IS UNKNOWN.
HOWEVER, THE POLICE HAVE
RELEASED A STATEMENT IN
THE LAST HOUR STATING
THEY BELIEVE THE
INDIVIDUAL TO BE...



...DR.
MID-NITE...



...WHO THE POLICE
SAY LEFT TELLTALE
EVIDENCE OF HIS PRESENCE.
DR. MID-NITE'S CURRENT
WHEREABOUTS ARE UNKNOWN,
HOWEVER, AND SO COULD
NOT BE QUESTIONED IN
THIS MATTER.

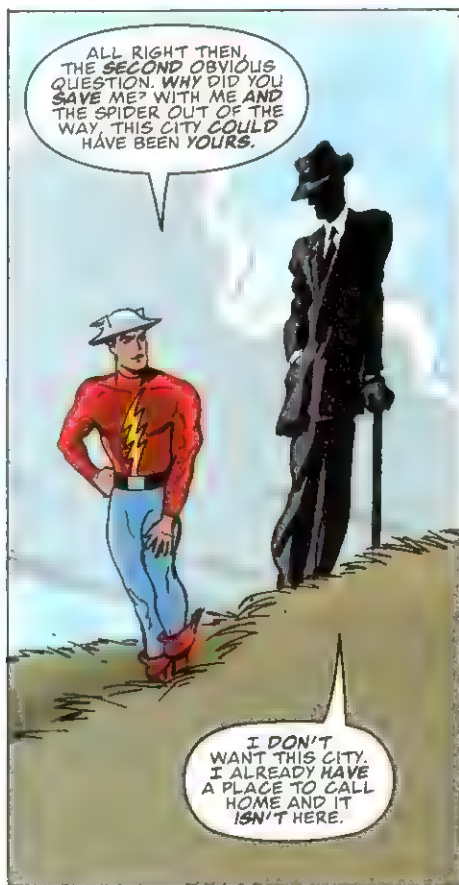


WHY DID YOU CHOOSE TO REMAIN ANONYMOUS?

I'M A VILLAIN. I HAVE STANDARDS TO UPHOLD.



NO REALLY. I CAN'T HAVE MY FELLOW VILLAINS THINKING I MIGHT SWITCH SIDES AND BETRAY THEM AS MUCH AS I HOLD THE BULK OF THEM IN ABJECT CONTEMPT. THEY DO HAVE THEIR USES FROM TIME TO TIME.

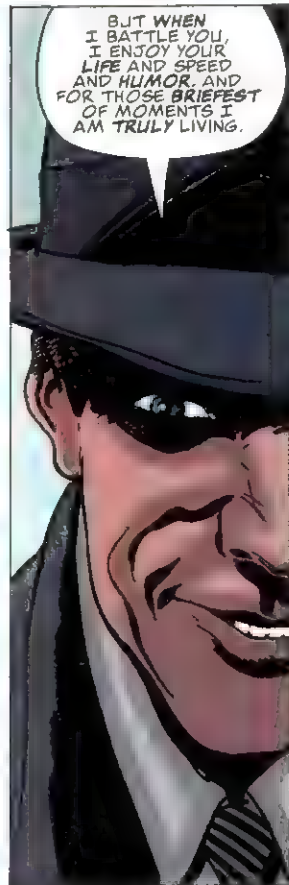


ALL RIGHT THEN, THE **SECOND** OBVIOUS QUESTION. WHY DID YOU **SAVE** ME? WITH ME AND THE SPIDER OUT OF THE WAY, THIS CITY **COULD** HAVE BEEN YOURS.

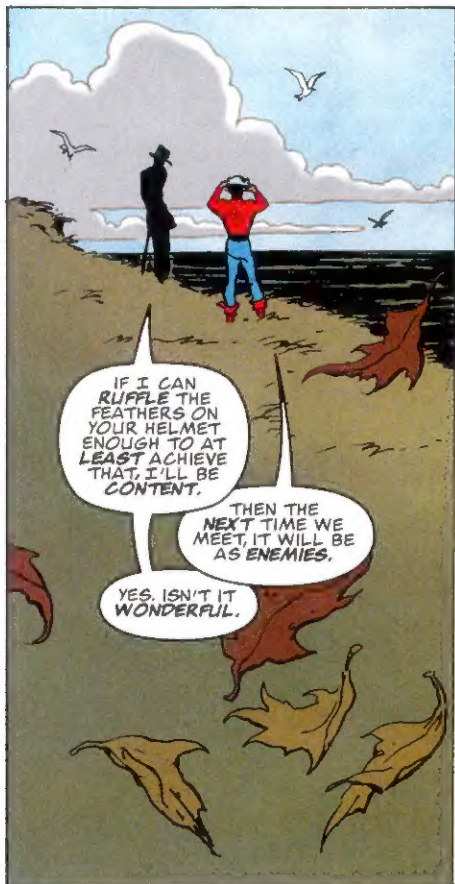
I DON'T WANT THIS CITY. I ALREADY HAVE A PLACE TO CALL HOME AND IT ISN'T HERE.



I ENJOY YOU, FLASH. I ENJOY THE CRIMES. I ENJOY THE COLOR. I WON'T DELVE INTO THE DETAILS, BUT IT'S DISTINCTLY POSSIBLE I AM NO LONGER ALIVE. I WALK AND TALK AND MAKE AN EXCEPTIONAL QUAIL MOUSSE. BUT I'M NOT CERTAIN I LIVE IN THE CONVENTIONAL SENSE.



BUT WHEN I BATTLE YOU, I ENJOY YOUR LIFE AND SPEED AND HUMOR. AND FOR THOSE BRIEFEST OF MOMENTS I AM TRULY LIVING.



And we
did.

And came the
morrow we met
in battle anew.

But there was one
moment... a lull in the
fight, when our eyes
met and we both smiled.



And then Jay punched me hard
in the jaw. He was good at that.

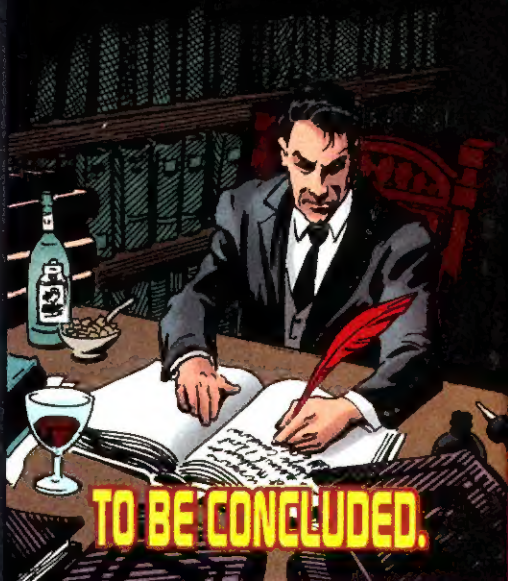
*I enjoyed that recollection. I always enjoy
recalling Jay, and killing a Ludlow who
deserved what he got.*

*I fought one more Ludlow in 1960, he was a
minor part of a tale too complex to relate now.
The events took me out West, where men are men
and the spitoons are full to prove it, it involved
cowboys and rustlers, robots, a barbarian king
transplanted through time and the ghost of
Pancho Villa.*

*In the course of this, I met two men
I'd admire greatly, one, a masked hero,
The Vigilante, who could shoot like a
demon and sing like a lark, the other, a
detective. I recall mentioning once before,
Sierra Smith, who did most of the actual
crime solving, while I stood around making
pothy remarks.*

*What concerns me now is a letter
I've received from a Ludlow here
in the present. A woman. A troubled
woman who fears for her husband.*

*This is a matter
I must deal with
soon.*



TO BE CONCLUDED.

FROM THE SHADE'S JOURNAL

The snows of Iceland were crisp and bright like a million billion night stars collected and scattered on the ground. The air was warm, despite the snow. I would have enjoyed it here, if I had not ventured to such a remote part of this land in search of a Ludlow. Indeed, I might yet have enjoyed it if said Ludlow had been anywhere in sight. Alas, that was not the case.

Several days before I had landed, a colleague and friend had bought some land here. Bill Lofthouse, English to a T (or tea as the case might be with Bill, with his very English addiction to said beverage), had always been in love with places North and cold of England. England is a land where Scandinavian winds, made colder still from a skip and a hop across the North Sea, hit England like a whip at certain times of year. That's quite cold enough for me, thank you very much. And God help your fingers and toes when the snows came.

At any rate, my friend Lofthouse had gotten the crazy notion to move to Iceland. He found the people friendly... the women especially, who had a relaxed sexuality which was more advantageous than the stricter mores of Edwardian London at that time. He bought twenty acres and spent the next year building a palatial mansion in the middle of it. In a letter he wrote to me of finding happiness. There was a girl he'd met and planned to marry. He had a home. He had contentment. He asked me if I would be his best man. I accepted.

Of course it would be then that a Ludlow decided to strike.

I had made the trip to Iceland with a minimum of suffering (I do not sail well. My stomach was not made for the churning roll of angry waters). By staying in my cabin and eating only bread and dry food, I managed to keep some of my stomach's contents where they'd been placed.

It was wonderful seeing Bill again. We'd laughed and delighted in old times and our hopes for the new century.

The wedding rehearsal happened two days later. I was in attendance, as were Bill and his bride. The bride's mother. A few others. And a Ludlow. I never did learn his first name, only that he came from that foul pack and that he wanted me dead.

The Ludlow burst into the church firing wildly with a Winchester rifle. The bride's mother took a shot in the chest. She still breathed as she fell, but I fear as she hit the ground, her lungs had ceased. The second shot hit Bill in the face. An ugly death on this, so pretty a day.

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Then Ludlow was gone, gone before confusion could be seized and choked to calm, allowing me to pursue this bastard sneak killer.

Investigation led me to a hotel where Ludlow had rented a room. The room yielded a bag of notes and letters that told me the man's identity, though the letters were sent to both a Jeremy and a Colin Ludlow, and which of them this was, I could not ascertain. I did, however, learn that the man had spent much time in the American West and I presume this accounted for his choice of weapon. There was also an entry remarking on a hut he knew of in an inhospitable part of Iceland where he hoped to hide out and enjoy the calm after killing me. The location was many miles from Reykjavik where Bill's wedding was to have taken place. Knowing time was not my friend this day, I set off immediately.

I should say that I am no more a good handler of horses than I am a handler of boats, and so after a day my horse threw me and bolted far and away. I should also note that learning the breadth and extent of my powers was something that took me just over a hundred years to truly succeed in doing. At the time of which I write now, I had yet to know I could enter my own shadow realm and use it as a portal from one place to another. Had I known this, I assure you this Ludlow would have been dead already.

On foot I continued. Wiser heads might have argued returning to town a smarter option, and renewing my efforts on the morrow. But although I write with calmness now much after the event, at the time I burned with hatred for this man who had killed my friend. I trudged on, resolute that I would find him and have him dead.

I recall awaking in the morning, in a sheltering lien where the snows were kept at bay. I presume I collapsed there in the weariness of night, but I don't remember doing so. My head was swimming. My eyes were wet and yet scratched as if desert dry. My lips were cracked. This would be the last time I ever underwent anything with red fire as my instigator. I would learn from this the folly of rash behavior. Unfortunately, hindsight would neither warm me nor give me sustenance at this hour.

"I can warm you."

A voice in my head. No, behind me. I spun around. It was the Devil. He wore a fur coat.

"I can warm you," he repeated. "I can heal you. I can make you strong and fed."

"Why would you?" I asked.

TO BE CONTINUED

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